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Free State Promises

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ARE THEY TRUE ?

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**THE FREE STATE PARTY SAY THAT THE
TREATY GIVES TO IRELAND:—**

- (1) Control of our own Army.
- (2) Control of our own Police.
- (3) Control of our own education.
- (4) Control of our own taxation.
- (5) Power to develop our own trade and industries.
- (6) Power to administer our own laws by our own judges.
- (7) Power to safeguard and protect Ireland's affairs throughout the world by the establishment of Ambassadors and Consuls.
- (8) Evacuation of all British Troops, Police and others inimical to Ireland's interests.
- (9) Power to complete land purchase.
- (10) Power to abolish slums and provide a decent home for the workers.
- (11) Power to look after and care for in the proper manner the aged and infirm poor.

ARE THESE STATEMENTS TRUE?

Before dealing with them in turn, remember four things which apply equally to all.

Most of the statements claim "control" over something or "power" to do something.

- (1) These "controls" and "powers" can never, under the best of circumstances, be complete, because the Free State, if it were set up, would be inside the British Empire, deriving its powers from a British Act of Parliament, legally subject to the supremacy of that Parliament, and under a British Governor-General, who would have the power to veto Irish laws.
- (2) The Treaty professes to give the Free State Dominion status—the constitutional status of Canada—but it does not do so. It permits six counties to secede from the nation and it imposes humiliating naval and military restrictions which are not, and could not, be imposed

on Canada. These restrictions make the Free State an inferior subject province of England, so that it would be useless for the Free State to claim the full constitutional privileges of Canada.

In any case, Canada owes her free position to her distance and power, not to England's observance of Canada's constitutional rights. England would never treat Ireland like Canada.

- (3) The Treaty permits the partition of Ireland, so that all "powers" and "controls," such as they are, apply only to 26 counties.
- (4) Most of the powers claimed for the Free State were, so far as they go, given under the Partition Act and Home Rule Bills and Acts of the past.

NOW TAKE THE STATEMENTS IN TURN:—

I. Does the Treaty give us control over our own Army?

No, not in reality: for four good reasons:—

- (1) The British Army will be massed in North-East Ulster, and will, under Clause VII., permanently retain, even in times of profound peace, garrisons in four important ports and aerodromes in their neighbourhood. Whenever England is at war Ireland must be at war. Whenever England chooses even to say that she has "strained relations" with any foreign country—even a country friendly to Ireland—she can occupy any number of Irish ports, establish any number of aerodromes, and throw into Ireland as many troops as she pleases—in fact, occupy and utilise the country for her own naval and military purposes. At the same time, under Clause VI., she forbids the Free State to have any naval forces whatsoever.

Do you suppose that under these Clauses "control of our own Army" will be anything but a farce?

- (2) The Free State's position is to be the same, nominally, as that of Canada. Now, the British King, represented by the Governor-General, is by law Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Army, and all Commissions in it have their origin in him. Even if he were not in command of the Free State Army, British control would be really there.

It might remain in the background as long as the Free State and its Army were loyally and meekly obedient to British rule, but at the least sign of restiveness down would come the mailed fist of legal control.

- (3) What kind of Army will it be which the Free Staters say "we" shall control? *A political army*, in which Republicans could not serve, but in which ex-British soldiers, Unionists, and men who have helped to subvert the Republic would serve. Such an Army, under the ultimate control of Britain, could never in any real sense be under the control of the Irish people.
- (4) What would be the function of the Free State Army if it were to escape suppression by Britain? *To suppress Republicanism itself and keep Ireland in the British Empire.* Lord Birkenhead, one of the signatories of the Treaty, said in the British House of Lords on March 15th that he was delighted to think that Collins would now have to do the work that Lord Essex and his troops did for Queen Elizabeth, and that the Irish Army would now save Britain the trouble of keeping the Irish down! "Control," moryah!

II. Does the Treaty give us control of our own Police?

In 26 counties, Yes. *So did the Partition Act.* Under that Act, "Northern" Ireland has a huge force of A and B Specials and R.I.C., all trained and armed as soldiers [as well as 13,000 British regulars].

But what will "our own police" be? *A political force* organised by a Free State Committee of 14, ten of whom are R.I.C. and ex-R.I.C. officers and men. It will accept in the ranks not only R.I.C. men who resigned for patriotic reasons, but men who served through the Terror. One of the Committee is D.J. Kearney, who was concerned in the arrest of Casement and Austin Stack and in the breaking up of peaceful meetings—a thorough-going enemy of the Irish people.

And, at the top, to see that our Police keeps us loyal to Britain—the Governor-General and, back of him, Britain herself.

To call this "our own Police" is a mockery.

III. Does the Treaty give us control of our own Education?

In 26 counties, Yes, up to a certain point and subject ultimately to the blue pencil of the Governor-General. *So did the Partition Act.*

In the six North-Eastern Counties, where, as everyone knows, control is most urgently needed, there is no control.

What sort of control should we have in Southern Ireland?

Control limited in the last resort by the over-riding power of the British Parliament.

Control limited by the fact that we must forswear our own independence and become a British Colony. In that case, could the whole truth about Irish History be taught to our children?

Control secured by men who abandon their ideals and cannot be expected to teach ideals to our children.

Control which will certainly lead to a more national education, but an education permeated with the *false doctrine that expediency outweighs principle*.

IV. Does the Treaty give us control of our own Taxation?

In "Southern" Ireland, Yes, of a sort. In "Northern" Ireland, No.

That means that *between a third and a quarter of Ireland's revenue, according to the latest figures available, will be outside our control*, including all the Income Tax and Customs revenue coming in from Belfast and the industrial North-East.

It means that there must be a chain of Custom Houses all along the border between "Northern" and "Southern" Ireland.

It means *chaos and heavy losses* in the collection of the principal taxes—Income Tax, Excise and Customs, and a *proportionately lower yield of revenue* even in the 26 counties, owing to the bad economic effects of partition.

It means that the cost of government for "Southern" Ireland must be proportionately much higher than before—(1) because the same Departments will be required, with less revenue to support them (the Post Office, for example, will be far more costly to run), in addition to the cost of a new Army; (2) because all the Congested Districts and poorest areas, which will require exceptional expenditure, are located in "Southern" Ireland.

The revenue left to us after all these deductions and burdens will be subject to a liability:—

(1) for *part of the British War Debt and War Pensions*.

(2) for *pensions to British police, judges and civil servants who resign or are dismissed from Government service*.

To sum up—*A reduction in the present rates of taxation is highly unlikely. An increase is possible.*

V. Does the Treaty give us power to develop our own Trade and Industries?

In "Southern" Ireland, subject to what is stated below, Yes. *So did the Partition Act*, for internal Trade and Industries.

In "Northern" Ireland, No.

- (1) This means that the national development of Trade and Industries is impossible. A nation cannot prosper under two Governments, two fiscal and taxing systems, two Labour Ministries, two Railway Departments, two Boards of Agriculture, etc.
- (2) Nor can a nation prosper without peace, to give stability to trade.

The Treaty would lead, not to peace, but to incessant unrest.

- (3) The Treaty keeps wireless communications, cable communications, and lighthouses and buoys all round the coast, under British control. But it is vital to our foreign commerce and merchant shipping that these things should be under Irish control.
- (4) The Treaty gives Britain entire strategical control of our island, including, of course, our ships and foreign commerce, not only when she is at war—even with a friend of ours—but when she is or pretends to be in any foreign difficulty whatsoever. She could close our harbours or divert our foreign trade, dry up our Customs Revenue, force us under any economic duress she likes.

Control of Trade, moryah !

VI. Does the Treaty give us power to administer our own Laws by our own Judges?

No, not even in "Southern" Ireland.

("Northern" Ireland will have its own laws and judges.)

- (1) In the first place, remember that "our own laws" can only become "our own" after they have received the *assent of the Governor-General* representing the British King and Government.
- (2) In the second place, the existing law is almost wholly British law, and, though it certainly could be amended, it is likely to remain mainly British, because the Free State must largely depend for its establishment and support on British and pro-British interests and wishes.
- (3) In the third place, the supreme Court of Appeal for the Free State Courts will be, as for Canada, the *Privy Council of Britain*, of which Galloper Smith is now the President and Carson a member.

This Court of Appeal will be able to decide, as for Canada, not only ordinary cases (with perhaps certain exceptions), but questions arising out of the interpretation of the Free State Constitution and the Treaty itself, which is full of ambiguities, and is interpreted by the Free Staters themselves in many different ways, and by the British often enough in diametrically opposite ways.

But England will decide.

VII. Does the Treaty give us power to safeguard and protect Ireland's affairs throughout the world by the establishment of Ambassadors and Consuls?

No, not even for 26 counties.

(All the external affairs of North-East Ulster will be under Britain.)

None of the British Dominions have "Consuls." They have trade agents in some countries, but generally use the British Consulates.

All the foreign and international relations of the British Dominions are conducted through the British Foreign Office, which acts for the whole united British Empire, and would act, of course, for the Free State. No Dominion has an "Ambassador."

Canada, however, owing to her exceptional position directly alongside the United States on a frontier of 4,000 miles, is peculiar in being allowed a "Minister Plenipotentiary" at Washington. It has been explained that this does not affect the "diplomatic unity" of the British Empire—for the British Ambassador at Washington is supreme—but it undoubtedly gives a valuable power to Canada.

Could the Free State obtain in practice the same valuable power? Of course not. Ireland is 3,000 miles by sea from Canada, and under the Treaty has not the same status as Canada. In regard to war and foreign relations the Free State is bound hand and foot to Britain, compelled to engage in all British wars, forbidden to defend herself by sea, her ports occupied, and the whole country liable to be occupied whenever Britain chooses to say that foreign relations are "strained." In the proper international sense, the Free State will have no separate existence at all. She will be what Lloyd George called her in explaining the Treaty at Westminster, the "front trench" of Britain.

The Free State might have some envoy to Washington and even to other capitals, but if they claimed under the Treaty to be foreign Ambassadors they would be laughed at.

VIII. Does the Treaty give us the evacuation of all British troops, Police and others inimical to Ireland's interests?

No, it does not.

In North-East Ulster there is no change. Troops and Police bitterly hostile to Ireland's interests remain. The British troops have been increased, and now number 13,000; the Orange Police (trained and armed as soldiers), 27,000. Total, 40,000.

As to the rest of Ireland, the Treaty says nothing about evacuation either of troops or police. On the contrary it provides (see above) for British military garrisons and ships of war at our ports and power to re-occupy the whole country in any period of "strained relations."

The Treaty allows the Free State to disband the existing Police, but not to have them evacuated. They are, in fact, being re-enlisted in the Free State Police.

IX. Does the Treaty give us power to complete Land Purchase?

Yes, but in 26 counties only (and subject even there to Britain's power to over-rule anything we do), though it is essential that a uniform national scheme should be devised.

We should have to take over liability for about 90 millions of outstanding Land Stock (i.e., for 26 counties), and for a heavy annual out-of-pocket charge of over a million due to the extravagantly bad financing of Land Purchase under the British system, which favoured the landlords' interests at any cost.

The same landlord interests will be powerful enough to obstruct land reform for tenant-farmers and landless men in the Free State, which will depend largely on Unionist support, and is now getting election funds from readers of the *Irish Times*.

X. Does the Treaty give us power to abolish slums and provide a decent home for the workers?

Yes, in 26 counties. *So did the Partition Act.* So did the meanest Home Rule Bill ever offered Ireland.

But it is a poor look-out for the workers under the Free State.

Griffith has pledged himself to give the Southern Unionists—who are mostly landlords and employers—special representation even in the elected Free State Parliament, and the Free State Party is bound hand and foot to all the capitalist interests which used to support the Union. Their first step was to make the Bank of Ireland, a purely British institution, their financial agents.

XI. Does the Treaty give us power to look after and care for in the proper manner the aged and infirm poor?

Of course it does, in 26 counties. *So did the Partition Act.* Home Rule of any kind would be a farce without such a power.

But more important than caring for the poor is to abolish the conditions which produce poverty.

Poverty in Ireland is the result of British domination. British domination is perpetuated in the Treaty.

Every selfish interest in Ireland is behind the Free State. These are not the kind of people who will end poverty in Ireland.

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